

Good Morning.

My name is Samantha Esbri. I have been a Bridgeport resident for 31 years and I am the proud parent of a two Bridgeport public school students. I am here today because our children cannot wait any longer for the education they deserve.

Governor Malloy's proposed budget is a good start but we still have a long way to go. With 40,000 children attending underperforming schools we cannot afford to wait another year before making a change.

I have had my share of challenges and experiences with the Bridgeport public school system. My daughter used to attend a district school where she was promoted from first to second grade even though she was not reading at grade level.

The district recommended summer school to help her catch up, insisting she move on to the next grade even if she wasn't read. I felt helpless in this situation. I am a single mother who just wanted the best for my child. Although it angered me, I sent my daughter to summer school because I had no other options. I hoped and prayed summer school was the answer, but I knew it wasn't enough.

I grew up in Bridgeport so I am familiar with the way things work; I used to pray for a way to get my child the education she deserves. Year after year, I would pray for something better, it took four years, before I got my daughter in to a high performing charter.

The school my daughter was able to get in is one that challenges her in all aspects. My daughter is learning responsibility and structure. She is working hard and being challenged and for that I am extremely grateful and proud

And what's almost harder is my story is not unique. We all know this. The longer we wait, the more children fall between the cracks; reducing their chances of graduating high school as well as limiting their opportunities of getting into college.

I'm here for every parent who wants to speak up but doesn't think that anyone will listen. I know that the decision-makers our communities aren't hearing stories like mine. Otherwise, we wouldn't be facing these decreases in funding for public charter schools and turnaround schools.

This crisis has been ignored years. We need legislation to show courage and take bold action to continue to create more schools so we can help our children become the best they can be.

I ask our state's elected representatives to stand up and join the chorus of parents who are demanding great schools for every child.

My voice is for all parents wanting the best education for every child. The time is now; let's do our part in helping save the future of our children, ALL CHILDREN.

Thank you.